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# Canada and Christendom





# CANADA AND CHRISTENDOM

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## EDITORIAL

An observer hears many varying opinions about the Draft Prayer Book, and its production, but on the whole, criticism is confined to a few points in each case. These points seldom agree, so that there can be no general or even "party" attack at this stage, and we hope it does not come. From the point of view of "Canada and Christendom", dedicated to the activation and improvement of the Parish, this is a most welcome revision, seeking as it does to bring the Canadian Church up to the Anglican ideal of forms of worship which the people can understand and use.

We believe that the Committee has carried out its work, as members have indicated, better than was hoped, in an atmosphere of frank co-operation, an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit can be observed working. The Revision has surprised, and for the most part, pleased those who were concerned about the Canadian Church's position at the end of the line in modern Anglicanism. It had to be a blend, under the circumstances of our life, but it is a thoroughly Anglican book, traditional, scriptural, spiritual, sacramental, and not archaeological!

Whether it is useful and realistic must be proved on the field of trial. It was produced by scholars, but with the help of Parish Priests. It came at the demand of the living Church, and it is the living Church which must decide its worth. Doctrines, liturgies, laws, all the Church's outward and visible signs, though they are set down by Councils, clerical and lay, are in the last end accepted or rejected by the faithful in their religious life, and the strength of Anglicanism has been that we let the "Consensus Fidelium" be our final arbiter. So we must extend to the new book that tentative welcome we have already given Revised Baptism and Marriage, and try it in use. There is time for revision or amendment. We pray these may be minor. They can only be intelligent and wise if they come from a living experience of the Draft Book as our more modern vehicle for the worship of God. The scholars have done their part, and done it well; now it is up to Bishops, Priests and People.

W.B.M.

## CHRISTMAS BACK TO CHRIST

University towns and cities in Canada have recently been aware of student groups campaigning to 'bring Christ back to Christmas'; these groups have urged the setting up of Nativity scenes in public places and have deplored the excessive commercialism which has partly destroyed the true meaning of the feast. A notable result of this agitation was the controversy over setting up a Crib at the Toronto City Hall. Many people thought that by the time controversy began the student movement had begun to look like a desire to impose Christian observance on the public. Whatever may be the case, I can see little evidence that such public agitation, worthwhile as it is from many points of view, can seriously change the spiritual pattern of the secular Christmas calendar. This pattern starts with the Santa Claus Parade, works up to an orgy of expectation through an orgy of advertisement, has as its chief 'sacrament' the Christmas turkey, and as its 'penance' the New Years' hangover and the usually abortive 'resolutions'. That the effect of this pattern is a let-down which communicates itself to the children so subtly that when they grow up they are in vast numbers tempted to spend the whole season inebriated, might be argued. I recently heard a supposedly Christian mother say: 'Oh heavens! Christmas is always such a rat-race and the children get so cross; I'm glad it's over!' This is what can be expected from the pagan calendar, but the Christian, which starts with penance and concludes with joy and new hope, must be used to produce quite different results.

If Christians are to transform the world they must start from within, from men's souls and motives, and work outward. This is particularly true among members of a society which accepts the outward forms of Christianity but which is not converted to Christ. It will not do to appeal even to this 'Christian' public on behalf of the liturgical calendar in its historic form: this public is not interested. Even converted Christians find the detail of the liturgical calendar very difficult to live up to. As it stands, the calendar was designed for the public in a very different age, and its detail is suitable for monastic rather popular observance. Even the Anglican offices of morning and evening prayer are difficult to adapt to the everyday worship of the contemporary layman and his family.

The history of the Christian liturgy shows how an intimate observance of the small sanctified Christian 'family' - meeting as the Jewish fellowships had met in Our Lord's time - eventually became a great act of public worship. Yet the need of the small 'prayer-meeting' remained, and if that need had been beyond the monastery walls the history of the Church's attempt to transform secular society would have been very different. The modern cell represents an attempt to restore the fellowship of the spiritual family within the parish. But there is still the natural family to be considered, an organism in which both the spontaneity of the cell and the formality of the parish liturgy can meet.



I consider Christian family life a suitable setting for experiment in developing simple offices which are intimately related to the liturgical year. Various such practices already exist. My present purpose is to suggest a pattern for the family 'offices' centered on the Christmas feast - this is just 'a' pattern, and its details will have to be introduced to a family gradually and adapted to family character. From my own experience, I can think of no better time for family prayers than the beginning of the evening meal, provided the prayers are not so lengthy as to let the roast get cold. The one meal at which the whole family is both present and awake can be made the ceremonial meal of the day, started and eaten at leisure and with dignity. Before the actual blessing of the food or 'grace', some verses may be repeated by members of the household and some small acts of ceremony performed.

Mrs. Anne Proctor, writing in The Christian Household (Longmans, 50¢, available), mentions the preparation for Christmas in her own family: this starts with the whole family helping to stir the cake on the afternoon of the Sunday next before Advent, as each member says the collect from which the day gets its name of 'stir-up Sunday'. Then, Sunday by Sunday during advent one more candle on a five-branched candlestick is lit, and the questions and answers, 'What does Advent mean? The coming. Whose coming? The coming of Jesus.' are interchanged. Then the collects are read and appropriate passages from Scripture. To this I would add, first, something special to celebrate St. Nicholas' Day (December 6th), perhaps as the day when everyone goes out, after a brief prayer, to do as much Christmas shopping as possible. Something must be done to show children that there is a real connection between Santa Claus and the Christian feast, and that Santa Claus is the way the pagan world remembers the great-hearted saint. Then, starting on December 16th, the saying of the Advent antiphons, antiphonally, at the beginning of the evening meal, should be started. These beautiful verses, which can all be repeated together on Christmas eve, provide a splendid means of raising our hearts constantly to God in preparation for the great feast (they are available at the end of The English Hymnal).

As to the feast day itself, the preparation of dinner and so forth should be as near complete as possible beforehand, so that nothing will interfere with the whole family going out to Communion. The after-effects of let-down and so forth may be averted by various means. In Mrs. Proctor's household the tree is not trimmed until Christmas eve, and the children are all taken to see the tree and given a little preliminary present each 'to settle the grounds'. My own suggestions refer to the period after December 25th. The song called 'The Twelve Days of Christmas' has recently become popular, and Christian poetry or song may well be used to make this period until Epiphany a meaningful time for children and adults. The poem I present is based on a rough correspondence of the days (some with their feasts), the twelve months, and some of the chief Christian occasions of the year. Each verse might be said, or added to a repetition of the verses already said, night by night, and per-

haps something said about the month it represents (it might also help to recall the verse appropriate to the Christian season or the month all through the year).

I have no suggestion about the New Year's celebrations: is it too much to ask that the eve should be spent quietly as the vigil of a feast? At least it might be the occasion to hold a quiet at-home and invite in one's friends to see a Christian home. I see little utility for 'resolutions' in a family in which penance and the promise to God to lead a better life have preceeded Christmas. Finally, when Epiphany comes the family should make a special effort to get to Church - I think it is a good thing if from time to time Christian practice disrupts Baby's schedule (Baby should always go to Church unless sick) and makes Daughter get out of bed an hour earlier than would be necessary for school. Either on the Day or on the Sunday following it the family might well make a pilgrimage to the Crib in the Church, bearing some gifts for the poor to be laid at the feet of the infant Saviour. The home crib and other decorations should be kept up until this date, and this will not be difficult if the tree has been acquired just before Christmas. The season can be continued into the 'forty days', less intensively, but to show that the Birth is meaningful for the whole year and all of life. This can go on till Candlemas, which many will recognize as a feast of Our Lord rather than of His mother. (though the Prayer Book seems to favour the latter rather 'Roman' idea!) can mark appropriately the official end of the Nativity celebrations. The saying or singing of the Nunc Dimittis on this feast is appropriate, and it might be made, for the rest of the year except the Advent-Christmas season, the corporate family thanksgiving after communion.

#### THE CHRISTMAS YEAR

By the first day of Christmas,  
In the first month of the year,  
The holy Sun of Righteousness  
Like Stephen bold we bear.

#### (Refrain)

All men, now and always,  
Know Christ, your King, is here;  
And Christmas months from these twelve days  
Make Christ victor of the year.

On the second day of Christmas  
The second month is nigh:  
Saint John shows the Lord Jesus  
Wise in God Most High.



The third day of Christmas  
Shows Lenten reparations;  
Men killed the harmless babies  
For the Desire of the Nations.

On the fourth day of Christmas  
We see the Passion story;  
How the Key of David, Jesus  
By death unlocked God's glory.

The fifth day of Christmas  
Shows happy Eastertide,  
When Jesus, Dayspring glorious,  
Came, the Bridegroom, to the Bride.

On the sixth day of Christmas  
The world's old year is spent,  
The Baptist's cry brings in the New,  
"God's Kingdom is here! Repent!"

The seventh day of Christmas  
Is that month's vision  
That Jesse's root to save us  
Transformed the Circumcision.

By the eighth day of Christmas,  
In the eighth month of the year,  
Transfigured God with us  
Makes all life to Him dear.

By the ninth day of Christmas,  
In the ninth month of the year,  
The cornerstone of the Holy Cross  
We preach to banish fear.

The tenth day of Christmas  
Shows the great Lawgiver  
By angels all at Michaelmas  
Ruling earth with sceptered power.

The eleventh day of Christmas  
Shows eleventh month beginning  
With all saints for holy Jesus  
The unwon nations winning.

The twelfth day of Christmas  
The month is His Advent:  
Wise men shall bow to Jesus,  
The wicked shall relent.

Graham Cotter

### 'THE PARISH AND ITS COMMUNITY'

There is an increasing interest among Anglicans in the whole question of the responsibility of a Parish for bringing the Gospel to the Community in which it is located. This new interest arises, at least in part, from a fresh understanding of how the social environment influences people's behavior. Since it is the call of the Church to proclaim the Kingdom of God, it is equally important to proclaim this good news in relationship to the social as well as the personal life of all people.

The understanding of the community and what makes it tick is, of course, the special study of sociologists. It is this branch of social science which for forty or fifty years has explored the patterns of community life and the dynamic forces which make for changes within communities. As Christians, we are not concerned to become sociologists, but we do want to know as much as possible about the community in which we live where forces and pressures tend to have evil or unfortunate effects upon the lives of its people. The Church can get a great deal of information and insight from the sociologist without yielding in priority to sociology or without having to train priests to be sociologists. What we need to do is to (a) try to adopt a simple sociological approach to the question of the community and (b) make use of some of the main sociological insights into the dynamics of communal processes.

Sociology defines the community as a certain geographical area in which people share many common ways of thinking and feeling, as well as many important customs, fads, and fashions. Certain rural villages and urban suburbs which have a good deal of social life independent of the metropolitan area to which they are attached, are some of the simplest examples of community on our continent to-day.

The challenge to every parish is to be the vehicle by which the Gospel is carried into the whole life of the community in which it is placed. This does not mean that it is a reform society, nor does it mean on the other hand that it is uninterested in the important social institutions of the community. Rather, it acts from certain basic principles. Firstly, the parish is an evangelising and missionary enterprise and responsible not just for the souls on its membership roles, but for all those living within its parish boundaries. This is a first principle of Anglicanism, although it has been much ignored in recent years. In fact, the tendency has been for many parishes to concern them-



selves with the interests and problems of their active members and to largely ignore the needs of the unchurched masses. Thus the average parish church is often largely directed by a small group of steady supporters who may think of religion more in terms of what they can get than in terms of what they have to give to the non church-going community. How the Bishop of Stepney, in his book "The Parish in Action" describes this trend: "The local church has tended to occupy itself more and more with its own concerns and those of its collected members, while largely ignoring the unchurched masses that throng the doors outside.....an inward-looking Church is really no Church at all, and unless it is looking outward upon the world with all its needs and sorrows, the Church is bound to fall because it is no longer filling the Divine Purpose of its existence."

A second principle is that the worship of the Church cannot be defined as 'devotional acts done in a building', but consists of the corporate offering of the whole life and tensions of the community unto God. The Parish Church should be the praying heart of the neighborhood. Bishop Stepney puts it this way: "Day by day it brings to Him the joys and sorrows, the sins and problems, the failures and successes of its people. The Parish Priest and faithful laity together offer this worship conscientiously and deliberately, and in their offering they include all those who do not worship for themselves. The life of the whole community is thus brought within the orbit of God's praise and compassion."

The third basic principle is that the Church stands for justice and mercy, in all of men's relationships. Wherever living conditions fail to meet these standards it is the prophetic function of the Church to proclaim the standards of Christ. This often means some kind of action in the sphere of politics, which frequently arouses considerable criticism, but such is the fate of most dynamic social prophecy. As T. S. Elliott says: "We are still involuntary atheists" in many areas of our social and political life. The evangelizing worship and prophetic involve a definite revolution in much of our contemporary parish life. For one thing, the parish Priest will minister more and more to those in need who are outside of the membership role of the Church, and in this the laity will be indispensable partners. There will be much less time devoted to fellowship meetings in the Church and more time given to activities in which fellowship will be a by-product of a Christian piece of service. Much of the programme of the parish Church will have to be worked out afresh. The Bishop of Stepney says: "A Church is often completely cluttered up with a large number of long-standing organizations which keep the Clergy inordinately busy and give a surface impression of a vigorous and healthy Church life....in the present state of affairs there is no time for members of the congregation to sit down and amuse themselves, much less to bring into being groups and societies with the entertainment of members as their first demand....the function of parish organizations is to build up the life of the Christians in order to send them out again into the parish as an essential but now a transformed part of it".

It is generally accepted that the responsibility of the parish to its community should be expressed in two ways. First, there is the Christian Witness in social and civic activities, which each Christian individual is required to carry out in his voting, by activity in voluntary social service activities or clubs, in labour unions, sporting and cultural organizations, or perhaps even in political parties. In each and every one of these public activities it is the obligation of the Christian to regard himself as acting for Christ and the Church, rather than allowing personal feelings prejudices or partnerships to make decisions. In particular, it is the Christian duty not to allow others in the group to propose sub-Christian policies without voicing a spirited protest. Especially when serving on committees, councils, or boards of organizations and governmental bodies, each Christian is called upon to view his work as a special opportunity of proclaiming the relevance of the Kingdom of God to each situations and opportunity as it arises. The Bishop of Stepney points out "The ability to act responsibly as Christians in these groupings does not come by the light of nature. It needs training and instruction, study and hard work. Part of a parish Church's responsibility to the community is to provide a range of study groups where people engaged in the same kind of local activities can meet together for discussion and planning and a growth in understanding.... there are no cut and dried ready-made answers. But there is any amount of room for experimentation, new ideas, and new insights, and these study groups in a parochial level may play a valuable part in the contribution that the whole Christian Church may yet make to the 20th Century World."

The second area in which a Church proclaims the Kingdom is in its corporate action on behalf of the redemption of the whole community within which it operates. There are five aspects to this task. Firstly, the parish Church is challenged to be the keeper of the social and moral conscience of its community. Secondly, it should be a pioneer in showing concern for the welfare of the community, both intellectually, culturally, and socially. Thirdly, it is up to the parish Church to look upon itself as a sort of friendly accepting home for the misfits and outcasts who find themselves on the margin of social and cultural life. Where the Church fails to measure up to this responsibility, such persons normally gravitate to religious sects or cults or crank political parties. Again, the ideal of the parish Church is to be the friend and supporter of all the members of its community--and this requires more than a nominal and superficial interest in their lives. Finally, the Parish Church is called upon to be the provider of the as yet unrecognized social needs of the people within its boundaries. In a changing society new needs are always emerging and the Church should be sensitive to these emerging needs and initiate study and action programmes to bring a Christian attitude towards such developments.

In discharging this corporate responsibility to the community, there are certain simple principles that may guide the Parish Church. For example, where existing institutions or groups are already set up to meet certain important social needs, or to cater to the problems of certain groups of the commun-



ity, it is folly for the Church to compete and establish similar groups or organizations. Here its role may well be to promote the fullest co-operation between the various bodies that are engaged in meeting a common social need. In general, it is the privilege of the Church to pioneer in new areas of human welfare, and as the community catches up and begins to provide for such needs, then the Parish Church can move ahead to pioneer in some newer venture. Above all, a Church must not lag behind the enlightened social conscience of the community, but should keep abreast of those vanguard groups which are facing our changing world with an intelligent and a sensitive conscience.

Successful implimentation of the kind of revolutionary parish programme that has been sketched herein requires some skillful methods of mobilizing the lay people of the parish. In England one of the most rewarding methods involves a combination of three new enterprises; namely, a Parish Conference, the organization of a Parish Meeting (once a week), and thirdly, emphasis upon the Parish Eucharist. The purpose of the Parish Conference is to launch the whole new programme which can only be properly outlined and considered if the main leaders of the parish meet together for one or two days in concentrated fashion. Occasionally, instead of having a two-day Conference, British parishes achieve the same end by what they call the four-day conference which means four consecutive evenings. The subjects discussed at such a Conference include: a) the parish and its congregation; b) the parish and its people; c) the parish and its community; and d) the parish in its worship. The Bishop of Stepney points out that "The Conference marked the turning point in the life of the parish because it reorientated the whole life of the Church and its organizations....there was no sudden scrapping of old institutions....but all were agreed that some had outlived their usefulness and would die a painless death". No doubt was left that "The Church ought to be sending its people out into the life of the neighborhood and that, therefore, they should not be using up their time and energy on behalf of the parish machine."

A successful parish Conference leads directly to the organization of what is called the Parish Meeting. "This is the one and only meeting which should be considered a parade by all Church members--this and the Parish Communion. The technique of the Parish Meeting is well known, though it varies from Church to Church....the slogan....was simply: 'Tuesday Night is Parish Night'.... This parish meeting was the gathering of the whole family of God to plan together, pray together, and play together". A typical programme would roughly include a) First Tuesday (of the month - a meeting for some special purpose such as parent-teacher association or a men's club; b) Second Tuesday, - the monthly Parish Party to which anyone outside the Church could be invited; c) Third Tuesday - meeting of the parochial Church Council with the whole Parish invited as observers; d) Fourth Tuesday - the parish meeting proper, which was more of a parade than the others and where important issues effecting the life of the parish are openly discussed. In this kind of an arrangement, the parish is gradually welded together as a big happy working fellowship with a common goal and a sense of belonging.

The other result of the Conference is the establishment of the Parish Eucharist. The Conference itself is planned so that it leads into the First Parish Communion on the Sunday, usually held at nine or nine-thirty a.m. The offeratory procession of the laity is usually introduced and special prayers are made for the spiritual renewal of the parish. All this is followed by a parish breakfast. From then on there is a strenuous effort to foster the Parish Eucharist as the main service of the Church and to follow it by a very informal type of breakfast. Naturally, this has to be adjusted to customs and situations of the individual parishes. The ideal is not easy of attainment. However, the whole strength of the new parish programme rests ultimately on the success with which the parish Eucharist truly integrates the parish and focuses its prayer and devotional life on its mission to the community.

One final method of strengthening the reorientation of the parish is a deliberate policy of training teams of lay people for specific types of service. Much has already been achieved in some parishes by careful training of selected men for lay-reading with the idea that they would serve in this capacity wherever there is a need. The whole orientation of lay people towards their calling can be vitalized by extending this principle and training teams of workers for such specific activities as: a) calling on the sick; b) praying for the sick; c) visiting new-comers to the parish; d) studying the social problems of the parish; e) ministering the laying on of hands for those who are sick in body or mind. We need to recover the insight of St. Paul as expressed in I Corinthians XII:28 "And God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues". These and other gifts are latent within the body of the laity, and with some training they can be brought to perfection and so can vastly strengthen the mission of the parish Church to its congregation and community. In fact, the parish Church that emphasizes the training of its lay people in the development of their natural gifts will never lack for consecrated leadership or evidence of the operation of the Holy Spirit.

W. E. Mann

#### EDITORS' NOTES

We are particularly grateful to Dr. Graham Cotter and Dr. W. E. Mann for their contributions to this issue of "Canada and Christendom." Dr. Cotter's work in developing a family devotional life is a good example of a devout layman living out The Faith. A priest by vocation and a sociologist by profession makes Dr. Mann the ideal person to report on the new and inspiring approach of the parish church to the community at large.





